

## **CITY HALL TASK FORCE MEETING SUMMARY**

The City Hall Task Force met at 4:00 p.m. on Monday, April 1, 2019 in Conference Room No. 1 at the Willmar City Office Building.

Members present were: Council Members Kathy Schwantes, Julie Asmus, Fernando Alvarado, and Shawn Mueske.

Also present were: Mayor Marv Calvin, Interim Planning and Development Services Director Sarah Swedburg, City Administrator Ike Holland, Finance Director Steve Okins, Project Manager Curt Hein, Fire Chief Frank Hanson, Public Works Director Sean Christensen, Rudy Vigil WRAC 8, Shelby Lindrud "West Central Tribune" and Administrative Assistant Janell Sommers. Members of the public who attended and spoke were Dirk Mueleners and Merle Birkeland.

Chair Schwantes asked the members of the Task Force for afterthoughts from the last meeting. Councilmember Alvarado stated he had received mostly positive feedback to the fire station location, someone expressed a concern for interference with the helipad, security, close proximity to the downtown and being it was in the Central Business District it was close enough and impeding future expansion of the fire station. Councilmember Mueske has received positive feedback as well and he has answered a lot of questions pertaining to all the locations under consideration. Mayor Calvin commented once he explained the methodological process that was used for the site selection they were comfortable. City Administrator Holland stated he received positive comments on the site with the exception of the concern of crowding the block and there are other alternatives. Councilmember Schwantes said she heard concerns about the noise yet they liked the access to downtown and the creation of a nice gateway.

Mayor Calvin and Councilmember Schwantes met with Fire Chief Hanson to discuss the site to see if there were any significant concerns. They will also be meeting with the firefighters on Thursday, April 4<sup>th</sup> to hear their concerns. At the next meeting a site SWOT analysis is planned to clarify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and any threats for the fire station location.

The Task Force walked through the proposed building construction timeline which was drafted taking into consideration a "where we are now and where we need to go" before the discontinuation of district heating. A financing timeline was touched on and staff was also asked that at a future meeting if all or a portion of this could be financed internally.

Councilmember Schwantes went through the timeline with the Task Force and invited comments from the group. Interim Planning and Development Services Swedburg noted there would need to be a plan review by the Planning Commission. Public Works Director Christensen was not sure the time line is achievable, he felt the time allotted for design and construction are about half as long as they need to be. Others felt that some of this would be determined by who is selected as contractor. City Administrator Holland stated the urgency to get on board with an architect and contractor as soon as possible. It was brought forward that the timeline could be shortened by possibly eliminating one of the public meetings, yet involving the public is high priority.

The site selection and professional services agreement for schematic and design development are scheduled to go before the City Council for approval on April 15<sup>th</sup>. Councilmember Mueske stated this committee was tasked with selecting the location and the other members of the council need to be in agreement before the timeline can be solidified and the design moves forward.

At next meeting on April 9<sup>th</sup>, a SWOT analysis will be done to look at the site even deeper.

Consider utility issues, opportunities to build into the existing building that could be beneficial for firefighters training, sound issues, etc.

The financing scheduled was touched on noting with a July 1<sup>st</sup> approval by the Council this leaves July – November which is the budgeting cycling and would work well as far as totally financing it or financing internally.

The Task Force discussed the parking issue in relation to fire calls. It was suggested by stacking the parking could be increased and typically when city employees are using the parking lot is the time when you would not have the 38-45 firefighters showing up because 30% or better work out of town. Meeting conflicts with the training room were also discussed in relation to council meetings. The future trends for 20 years down the road, and how that would impact the facility were discussed. It was not foreseen that the current fire station would need to expand. The trend if the City grows is toward substations.

Public Comments: Dirk Mueleners spoke expressing his concern of the process whereby at the previous meeting there were six site options, there was four by the end and then when it comes to this meeting is down to one. From a public perspective he didn't know why that happened. Merle Birkeland, former Fire Chief/Marshall for Willmar addressed the Task Force. He emphasized the need for adequate training facilities, parking for employees and responders, as well as auxiliary things that happen when there is a major fire. There is a storm drain on the southeast corner the training room that is very critical and also a water main that enters off of First Street. He expressed concern for losing the exit onto First Street as well. Councilmember Mueske noted these items should all be addressed at the next meeting as they could be very critical and also complete the SWOT exercise which narrowed the site selection.

The next meeting date will be April 9, 2019 at the Fire Station.

The meeting ended at 5:16 p.m.

Janell Sommers  
Administrative Assistant